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April 3, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Boxer Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works 410 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Vitter Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works 456 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510-6175

Dear Senators Boxer and Vitter:

I am writing on behalf of the National Hispanic Medical Association (NMHA) to express our support for S.1009, the Chemical Safety Improvement Act (CSIA). This bipartisan legislation is a pragmatic and essential step to enhance the federal government's oversight and regulation of industrial chemicals being produced and used in the United States.

NMHA is the leading organization representing Hispanic physicians. Our mission is to empower Hispanic physicians to improve the health of Hispanic populations which we pursue through education and research initiatives and by providing support to Hispanic health professionals and students.

Many Hispanic communities are traditionally underserved, and issues of environmental exposures are of great importance to the health and well-being of those communities. Evidence and time have shown that there are many questions to be answered about the effects of chemicals on our environment and health, particularly in underserved communities. We believe that a more effective, timely regulatory system administered by the EPA will help answer these questions and improve the overall safety of chemicals being used in the marketplace today and, in turn, enhance the safety and health of all populations, including that of Hispanic Americans.

At the same time, as medical professionals, we are cognizant of the essential role that chemicals play in the modern practice of medicine and in our everyday lives. Advances based in chemistry have allowed us to better serve our patients and have helped improve the overall quality of life for the Hispanic community – an important goal of our organization.

We support the CSIA because it represents a balanced approach to making chemical regulation stronger, while not undermining the benefits provided by innovations in chemistry. The fact that the law regulating chemicals has not been updated since 1976 is, itself, alarming and we believe creates an urgent need for Congressional action. This first of its kind bipartisan legislation is the best chance for achieving reform given the divided nature of the Congress and the historical stalemate that has plagued this issue.

We strongly urge leaders in the Senate to consider the needs Hispanic communities throughout the country and work constructively to pass this important compromise legislation.

Sincerely,

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH President & CEO